1: Longrigg G-4, 5 (ca. 1915-1940) MH1 Iraq MH1



184 795 [578] the two main social-religious communities. Northern 'Iraq belonged generally to the Sunni element in Islam, southern to the Shi'i, while in the divided central districts the Shi'a predominated. Their relations were by tradition and conviction uncordial, and their pervasive antipathy could turn to violence. There was little social admixture between them, and the Shi'is were, by their own will, almost wholly excluded from the system of education provided by the Sunni Government—and, indeed, from that Government itself.

563 162 The mountaineers of Mosul wilaya belonged to far the largest of the 'Iraq minorities, the Kurds. These formed a substantial part—perhaps a quarter or a third—of the whole Kurdish race, which occupied a wide belt from eastern Anatolia to and across the Russian and Persian frontiers: a territory claimed by fervid Armenians as their own, and covering five wilayas of Turkey, of 563 621 which Mosul was the south-eastern. The Kurds formed a clear racial and linguistic block with a strong pride in past achievement and memories of princely independence. Convinced of superiority to Turk and Arab alike, they differed markedly from the latter in character, environment, and personal habit, but closely resembled them in a social organization which represented an identical response to similar social needs. Nomadism among them, with sheep and cattle in place of camels, was confined to a few tribes; but tribal loyalties prevailed everywhere, except when village or district interests, or a mere absence of leaders, had led to detribalization. About half of the Mosul sanjaq was Kurdish country, divided into the qadhās of Dohuk, 'Amadiya, Zakho, 'Aqra, and Zibar: the whole of Sulaymaniya sanjaq: and a full two-thirds of Shahrizur.

563 795 197 Except for small sections with Shi'i or heretical leanings, the Kurds of Mosul wilaya were Sunnis of the Shafi'i or Qadiri sects. Their homogeneity in language and culture was less than complete: of the three traditional or mistily historical groups—the Badinan Kurds between the Greater Zab and the Van frontier, the Suran between the two Zabs, and the Baban from Lesser Zab to Sirwan (Diyalā)—the first differed in its Kurmanji dialect from the other two, who, in common with most of the Persian Kurds, spoke and speak the Kurdi or Kurdish which had never achieved literary status.

563 621 The tendency of the surviving Kurdish nomads to settle had long been apparent, but had still far to go; and the gradual encroachment by the hillmen on the nearest of the plains—around Arbil, and west of Kifri—was to continue, household by household, for 563 the next half-century. By 1900 the freedom of the Kurdish valley dynasties, on any major scale, belonged to the past. Turkish Qa'immaqams and Mudirs, sometimes Kurdish by race, were

5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 MI Middle East
Iraq MH1

# CHAPTER VI

## *THE ARABS OF MESOPOTAMIA*

MESOPOTAMIA does not belong to Arabia geographically. It lies to the north of the peninsula and includes the territory between the mountains of Asia Minor on the north, the mountains of Persia on the east, the Syrian desert on the west and the Persian Gulf on the south. The area enclosed between these limits is enormous. These are its natural boundaries, but politically the territory included takes in certain districts that belong to Persia and Turkey as well as the kingdom of Mesopotamia. It is of interest to include Mesopotamia in any discussion of Arab life, for although the Mesopotamians are not in Arabia geographically, nor even politically, racially they are Arabs as truly as the inhabitants of Nejd or the dwellers in the valleys of Oman. Practically all of the inhabitants of Mesopotamia are Arabic speaking and Arabic in origin, the chief exceptions being the numerous Jews who have come into the country from the north and the small community of Sabaeans, or fire-worshippers, who are a remnant of the people that the Arabs found inhabiting the country. The Arab is the dominant element, and the others together would probably not amount to five per cent of the whole.

The character of the country is most easily understood if we start by saying that Mesopotamia is the enormous

6:Ireland S-5 (no date)1937 MH1 Iraq MH1



the Turkish Ministry of Interior in April, 1913, had directed that the use of Arabic should be allowed in the Courts of Justice and in public offices. In spite of the failure to carry out this concession literally, the use of Turkish was more of an affront to Arab sentiment than a handicap to litigation. Turkish was, and in many centres still is, the polite language, much as French was at the Courts of Prussia and Russia in the eighteenth century.

Although criminal cases could be tried in these newly established civil courts, the bulk of such cases was not sent to them. Serious cases, mainly robbery under arms, continued to be tried by military courts, under a highly summary procedure.[1] In Basra, 'Ashar, 'Amāra and Nāsiriya, the Military or Deputy Military Governors decided disputes of all kinds, while in the districts the same powers were exercised by Political Officers. Until after the fall of Baghdad no civil courts existed outside of Basra town.

### *Justice in Tribal Areas*

It was soon evident that the 'Iraq Code could not be applied in its entirety to the tribal areas, comprising practically all of the Occupied Territories outside the towns. It was also clear that special powers were needed by the Political Officers to dispose of civil and criminal cases in their districts. To meet the situation, the Tribal Criminal and Civil Disputes Regulation was drawn up by Mr. H. R. C. Dobbs,[2] on the lines of the Indian

[1] *Admin. Rep., Basrah*, 1917: *Rep. Military Governor of Basrah*, 1917, p. 199.

[2] Henry Robert Conway Dobbs, G.B.E., K.C.S.I., K.C.M.G., K.C.I.E. (1871-1934), may be rightfully called one of the makers of modern 'Iraq. He saw wide and distinguished service in India, Persia and Afghanistan. As Revenue and Judicial Commissioner to Baluchistan, 1909, 1911 and 1917, he came into direct contact with the 'Sandeman System'. He was under orders as Resident to Turkish Arabia when war broke out in 1914, but it was as Revenue Commissioner that he supervised the organization of administration, 1915-16, while Sir Percy Cox, Chief Political Officer, enlarged political relations with the Arabs. Versatile in talents, but essentially an administrator, he brought to the difficult period, 1923-9, when he served as High Commissioner to 'Iraq, a great capacity for realistic thinking, a highly developed sense of duty, and a deep loyalty to the Empire which dominated all his relations with the Arabs.



1 [Under British Military administration ca 1917]

3:Royal Institute of International Affairs U-4 (no date)1954 M1 Middle East
Iraq MH1



161 taken, in 1947, gave the total population as 4,799,500; before that there were periodical official estimates as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1930 | 2,824,000 |
| 1935 | 3,560,000 |
| 1943 | 3,995,000 |

The present population is probably about 5 million. According to the census, Baghdad has a population of 364,000, Mosul 302,000, Basra 94,000, and Kirkuk 69,000, Hilla being the only other town of over 50,000 inhabitants. Significant figures for density of population could be determined only after defining habitable land and distinguishing rural populations; the accepted density figure for the country as a whole (27·4 per square mile) means little. In the total cultivable area as calculated by an English authority the average density is 102 per square mile, but in many areas the density is much more than this for the rural population alone, and in the Baghdad and Basra districts exceeds 300 and 800 respectively per square mile.

163 165 164 *Vital Statistics*. For a number of reasons, which include the inaccessibility of large areas of Iraq and the lack of doctors in the rural districts, vital statistics are not available for the country as a whole. Statistics of possibly fair accuracy are, however, published for the population of some 1,160,000 served by the health centres in the main cities of Baghdad, Basra, and Mosul; the latest, compiled for 1950, show a birth-rate of 27 and a death-rate of 12 per 1,000, with an infant mortality figure of 97 per 1,000 live births. The main causes of death were stated as old age, respiratory diseases other than tuberculosis, malaria, heart diseases, and tuberculosis.

197 *Language*. Arabic is the official and most widely spoken language. The 800,000 odd Kurds speak an Iranian language in various forms. Turkish dialects are spoken in Irbil, Kirkuk, to some extent in Khanaqin and in smaller intervening towns, and Syriac by Christian communities in northern Iraq. Other minority languages, such as Armenian, also occur, while in the Holy Cities of the south (Kerbela and Najaf) Persian is widely spoken.

## Religions[1]

642 The constitution declares Islam to be the official religion of the state, but guarantees complete freedom of conscience and worship in conformity with accepted customs subject only to the maintenance of public order and morality, declares the absolute equality of all Iraqis before the law, gives communities

[1] See above, p. 51ff.

3:Royal Institute of International Affairs U-4 (no date)1954 M1 Middle East
Iraq MH1



(c) *Jews*

Until recently Iraq contained a large community of Jews whose families had been settled in the country for hundreds or even thousands of years. They lived mostly in the large towns, especially Baghdad, in whose economic life they played an important part as merchants, financiers, manufacturers, and members of the professions. There were also Kurdish-speaking Jews in the north, mostly urban traders and craftsmen but also rural cultivators. A law of 1931 gave Jewish communities self-government in their own affairs, and there was a highly organized communal life, with schools, hospitals, and charitable institutions. In consequence of events in Palestine the majority of Jews left Iraq in 1950–1, mostly for Israel.

(d) *Yazidis*

These are vulgarly known as 'devil-worshippers' but, although their religion includes the propitiation of Satan, it might more justly be described as an amalgam of Christian, Muslim, and Magian elements. They are divided between Jebel Sinjar and the Shaikhan district north of Mosul, speak a Kurdish dialect, except in their rites, where Arabic is used, and are probably of Kurdish origin.

(e) *Sabians*

('Baptists'), also called the Mandaeans and the 'Christians of St John'; their religion combines elements of various origins and periods. Most of them are craftsmen—especially silversmiths—in the large towns.

(f) *Shabak*

Of Kurdish origin, who live in the area of the Yazidis and are not clearly distinguished from them; their religion contains Yazidi and extreme Shii elements.

(g) *Other Sects*

Include Bahais, Sarlis, Kakais, Qizilbashis, none of them of any political significance.

## Political History

Written history began in Iraq at the end of the fourth millennium B.C., but archaeological remains from much earlier periods, first in the north and later also in the south, give evidence of palaeolithic man, of agricultural neolithic man and, from the sixth and fifth millennia, of increasing human progress expressed successively in extensive agriculture, copper

65:Landshut S-4 (no date)1950 M1 Middle East
Iraq MHI

CHAPTER III

# IRAQ

563 An examination of the development of Muslim-Jewish relations in Iraq reveals two noteworthy features, apparently at variance with each other. On the one hand, probably in no other Muslim country has the Jewish minority been so closely associated with the whole fabric of social and political life as in Iraq. On the other hand, in none has anti-Jewish feeling in recent years been so general and nowhere have anti-Jewish measures been applied so systematically.

The Jews in Iraq constitute, as far as we know, the oldest Jewish settlement outside Palestine. Indeed, even if the origin of the House of Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees is disregarded, Jewish settlements in Iraq can be said to have first taken place about 600 years before Jews from Palestine emigrated to Egypt. The majority of the Jews now living in Iraq are the direct descendants of those Jews who, after the destruction of the First Temple 2,500 years ago, were led into exile in Babylonia and remained there after the return of some of their number to Jerusalem with Ezra.

But the great antiquity of the Jewish community is not, of course, the sole reason for the exceptionally close bonds which unite Iraqi Jews to their country and their non-Jewish neighbours. "They have made themselves an integral part of the nation. Both in business and in politics they have always played a big part." (E. Main: *Iraq*, 1935.)

Their close association with all aspects of the life around them is in part due to the fact that the proportion of the Jewish minority in Iraq to the rest of the population is far higher than in other Muslim [162] countries. Whereas the Jews in Egypt represent only 0.4 per cent of the total population, in Iraq they amount to about 2.5 per cent, and as much as 25 per cent in the capital, Baghdad.

It should be noted that it is more difficult to determine the total number of Jews in Iraq than in Egypt. For while in Egypt the Jewish population is almost exclusively concentrated in the big towns, in Iraq it is dispersed up and down the country, including some scattered among the Kurdish tribes in the North.

563 The Kurdish Jews live somewhat apart from the rest of the Jewish ● [197] community, just as the Kurdish minority lives apart from the Arab 162 population. Both are different from the Arabs in general character and daily habits. The language of some of the Kurdish Jews is Syriac (a [463] form of Aramaic), while those in Mosul speak Kurdish. They are mainly traders and craftsmen and live scattered among the various Kurdish villages and towns. In the Amadia district, however, there can be found a number of Jews engaged in tilling the land. It is

65:Landshut S-4 (no date)1950 M1 Middle East
Iraq MH1



difficult to make even an approximate estimate of how many Jews live in these villages—perhaps 5,000-6,000 at most. They have remained relatively untouched by the events of the past few years, which have had such a revolutionary effect on the rest of the Jewish community.

The total Jewish population of Iraq is estimated at 120,000. Although this figure may be out of date, it is probably not far wrong, if allowance is made for emigration, on the one hand, and increase in the birthrate, on the other. Of these, between 90,000 and 100,000 live in Baghdad. But neither is it the larger number of Jews in the country as a whole nor their concentration in the capital which accounts for the difference of their position, at least in the past, from that of their coreligionists in Egypt.

Most important is the fact that Western influence on Iraqi Jews, being no stronger than it was on the town-bred Muslims, was much weaker in Iraq than in Egypt. Middle-class Jews in Iraq took to European dress at about the same time as the Muslims. Likewise, in their daily habits, their houses, and, last but not least, in their language, there was no marked difference between the two communities. Arabic has always been, and still is to-day, the mother-tongue of both Jew and Muslim.

True, as a result of the higher educational facilities provided by the activities of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* and the Anglo-Jewish Association, knowledge of French or English is more common among the Jews than the Muslims. But this difference has never been sufficient to detract from the central fact that Western influence on the Jews has not been much stronger than on other Iraqi communities. All this is in strong contrast to the situation in Egypt and—again unlike Egypt—there has been no noticeable immigration of Jews from European countries.

During the nineteenth century the Jewish community in Iraq was fairly prosperous; and freedom to develop was assisted to no small degree by the two proclamations issued by the Sultan of Turkey in 1839 and 1856. At that time there was already a considerable number of well-to-do families. The schools of the *Alliance* helped to raise the community's educational standard. When the first Chamber of Deputies was opened in Istanbul in 1876, it included a representative of the Iraqi Jews (Menahem Danyiel) and, later, after the Constitution of 1900, the community was represented by Hezkiel Sassoon, a retired senior Ottoman Government official.

During the First World War, however, the Jewish community suffered great hardships at the hands of Turkish governors. Just prior to the fall of Baghdad in 1917, some of its leading members suffered death, torture, and imprisonment.

When, therefore, the Arabs rose against the Turks and made common cause with the Allies, the Jews regarded the fight for liberation as their own. They welcomed the establishment of the new Iraq under British Mandate, and many immediately offered their